

December 10, 1957

TO: Members of the Sub-Committee on Trainable Retarded of the governor's
Advisory Board

FROM: Margaret Doren

Because I have earnestly invested of myself in this study and report which I have been privileged to make, and in so doing have arrived at certain convictions, I very respectfully submit the following reply to Dr. Harris' memo of December 5.

1. I don't believe that extending the scope of our departments of education to include children at the lower levels of intelligence need deter an acceleration of academic opportunities for the normal and gifted children. We cannot do one without the other. We cannot do one at the expense of the other. As a mother of three gifted children I have long deplored the lack of challenge in our schools, the absence of a competitive marking system to which gifted children arise, and modified curriculum attuned to the average or less. But I could never in good conscience work for an improvement in the curriculum for the gifted were I to do so by saying: "We have neither time, energies, nor funds then for the retarded." Only by giving the less gifted the very finest program we can devise, can we in good conscience to equally well for the gifted. They are all children. They all have fond parents. They are all citizens of the United States.

I cannot believe that a class for trainable children in one of the empty rooms of my beautiful school would in any way deter an improved program for our normal and brighter children. It might to the contrary actually give impetus to the improvement of the program-make everyone more aware of the individual differences in children to which we must adjust our curriculum. It might dramatically suggest the need for employing each child's potential to its maximum, and offset the trend which has been dominant for some time of modifying programs downward for the masses. In spite of lip service to individual differences, our schools have been guilty of teaching down the middle aisle and letting the fringes gather what they could.

I think education and educators are capable of expanding their services in both directions and doing an improved job all along the way.

2. The proposal that the entire program be placed in the hands of the department of welfare is difficult to think through, but in trying to do so, I ask:

In the reference to the "already overburdened sister department" (of education) I question who is more overburdened. A survey of the case load of the solitary social workers in a number of our 87 counties might make the teacher load look positively carefree. Can we place this additional burden on county welfare workers?

What would it entail—a case worker seeking a suitable classroom advising a teacher, supervising orders for materials, conducting parent case work, arranging for admissions, solving all the problems? The state department of welfare might provide a state wide supervisor but actual provision for these trainable would rest with the county welfare board, frequently composed on one director and one case worker—sometimes only the director when case workers are unobtainable. Were each county to try to provide a supervisor for these special classes the cost and problem of securing personnel would be prohibitive.

Would we continue to certify teachers for this branch of special education through our University training department and the State Department of Education and require these teachers to seek employment through the Department of Welfare?

It is my present understanding that the graduates of the school of social work have quite limited requirements in the study of mental deficiency and psychology. Wouldn't it be necessary to revise their programming to a much greater extent than is now being given consideration?

Isn't the use heat, light, lunch, janitorial and nursing services through the existing facilities in our schools, an obvious economy? If completely separate facilities must be provided in all cases, what would be the cost? The taxpayer supports both the department of education and the department of welfare.

What of our presently trained special education supervisors? Should they divide their services between schools and welfare agencies or ignore the classes for trainable children which would be under the department of welfare?

How would we avoid the pitfalls of the Ohio program?

3. In regard to the query concerning "care" versus "education", the words on page 57 (last line) may equally well be "care and training". It was written as words flow without any special eminence. If stated as "training", then I ask, can we ever divorce training from education? There may be some issue raised about care versus education, but care too is involved in the daily school life of the normal child. Is there a definitive line? Were we to eliminate all training from the classroom would it not seriously constrict our educational goals? And what of kindergarten? Can't the same question be raised as to the desirability of its position in our education program? We have no kindergarten at Burnsville because the school board and superintendent feel that it is only supervised play, and fail (as yet) to recognize the values of kindergarten training as a prerequisite to more formal education. Can I argue for training in kindergarten as a necessary readying of the child for more directed learnings, and still support the thesis that education and training are concise and separate from each other?

How much of the continuing curriculum through the elementary grades and high school would be classified as training if the program, teaching procedures, and requirements of group conduct were analyzed?

Isn't it conceivable that for some children the training part of this educative process is the limit of their capacity and in our adjustment to individual differences, this is what education will plan for their curriculum?

In somewhat this same vein of thought, but in reply to the statement that the effect of the report is to "blur and confuse" the distinction between child care and child education I would like to make two observations:

- a. In no instance does the report propose to educate the trainable. To the contrary, emphasis is place on explaining the limitations of these children, and proposes only a program of training for them.
 - b. In spite of the effort in this report to establish this distinction. It is impossible to completely delineate between care, training, and education. They are not separate entities or functions. We distinctly care for and train those educate in our public schools. These are inseparable processes in child growth and development.
4. The cost figure of \$1022 for each individual in an institution in Minnesota last year is an average figure for all patients. For the trainable child obtaining classroom experiences, this figure would be higher. This figure does not include capital outlay. Were we, by over-riding parent desires to keep their children at home, to succeed in institutionalizing all trainable children, the building of additional institutional space would unquestionably exceed the cost of providing for these children public schools. We do not keep any children waiting at the schoolroom door for four years until he have room for them as is now the case in their awaiting institutional space. The public schools are crowded but their existing facilities are much more able to receive the relatively small number of additional children, than are the institutions. One thousand children in groups of five to ten in various school systems in Minnesota are a relatively simple additional burden. One thousand children divided between Cambridge and Faribault would be a staggering increase in population.
5. May I propose that in the logic sequence developed from the quotation from p. 71 of the report, that the words "and they have companionship all day" have not been given sufficient weight. This is a function of the institution which the home cannot provide-it is one of the stated goals of a school program for the trainable. Because this goal is provided by the nature of institutional life,

it is possible to reduce the time spend in classroom experience for the institutionalized child.

Also the paragraph which follows which begins with a premise I do not entirely concede as "legitimate", but will not argue at this time, does not follow through in its deduction. It states: "institutions do a better job in fundamental habit training than do parents. Since institutions already do a(a better job than parents?), the children there need less of public school-type special education than do children who are in their homes." HENCE children in their homes need more public school type special education than do those in institutions.

With the deduction as here corrected I would agree. The statement appearing on page 3 as the final deduction: "Public school classes appear to be a substitute for institutions" is an irrelevant conclusion to the facts as stated. It might be amended as stated to say: "The home plus public school classes appear to be a substitute for institutions" which is reasonably true, but this is not entirely established by the logic sequence as presented.

I propose that a minority report presented in opposition to the present reported plan as submitted, should include some details of a workable alternative. I have given this new development several days of contemplation. I believe that a adoption of this new proposal would require an entire restudy of the problem with a search of literature and study of programs to support it. I sincerely hope than an understanding can be reached among the members of the subcommittee. It seems that if five cannot unanimously support a plan that presenting it statewide would be futile.

Very sincerely,

Margaret Doren